



June 24, 2003

Commemorating President Bush's Historic June 24, 2002 Speech

Introduction

Today marks the one-year anniversary of President Bush's historic Rose Garden speech which expressed U.S. support for the creation of a viable Palestinian state and a comprehensive peace to ensure Israel's security and sovereignty. Central to the speech was the President's statement that this goal could only be achieved if Yasser Arafat were removed from power, *i.e.* regime change, and if terrorist organizations, such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and Islamic Jihad, were dismantled by the Palestinians themselves. In calling for regime change and elimination of Palestinian-backed terrorists, President Bush opened a new front in the War on Terrorism.

In the speech, the President laid out a series of results that had to be achieved to accomplish the ultimate goal. He stated specifically that the Palestinian people should elect "leaders not compromised by terror."¹ He called on the Palestinians to build a new state through reform, which requires entirely new political and economic institutions, based on democracy, market economics, and action against terrorism. He said that if the Palestinians actively pursued these goals, "America and the world will actively support their efforts" and reach agreement with Israel, Egypt, and Jordan on "security and other arrangements for independence."² He added that "when the Palestinian people have new leaders, new institutions, and new security arrangements with their neighbors, the United States of America will support the creation of a Palestinian state whose borders and certain aspects of its sovereignty will be provisional until resolved as part of a final settlement in the Middle East."

On April 30, 2003, President Bush formally unveiled the so-called "roadmap" to begin implementing the proposals in his June 24 speech. Its release followed the March 14 election of Mahmoud Abbas [a.k.a. Abu Mazen] as Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, which satisfied the June 24 speech precondition laid down by the President that the Palestinians be represented by an empowered, accountable prime minister.

¹ Remarks by President Bush in the Rose Garden, June 24, 2002.

² President Bush, June 24, 2002.

President Bush declared that the roadmap “represents a starting point toward achieving the vision of two states. It is a framework for progress toward lasting peace and security in the Middle East. Implementing the roadmap will depend upon the good faith efforts and contributions of both sides. The pace of progress will depend strictly on the performance of the parties.”³

The “roadmap,” if successfully implemented, would not only create the conditions for the establishment of a Palestinian state and ensure Israel’s national security, it also would seriously attack the deadly practice of state-sponsored terrorism. In fact, while some contend the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian issue is a necessary condition to further progress in the War on Terrorism, it may instead be one of the final achievements — by virtue of the dismantlement of terrorist networks and elimination of state-sponsored terrorism. Given the recent success in Afghanistan and Iraq in using U.S. and allied forces to destroy terrorist elements, President Bush appears to have calculated that additional international support could be garnered against Arab-Muslim support of terrorists by beginning to address the Israeli-Palestinian issue now.

As the *Economist* noted in a recent editorial, the victory in Iraq “has left America in a position to bring new pressure on potential spoilers such as Syria and Iran, and the rejectionist guerillas they succor.”⁴ The *Economist* further noted that “by removing a threat to Israel and a source of support for the *intifada*, it has made it safer for Israelis to compromise and harder for Palestinians to believe that they will achieve their aims by violence.”⁵

Moreover, the exercise of U.S. diplomatic and military muscle throughout the War on Terrorism (and specifically in Afghanistan and Iraq) has made the governments of Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and others in the region reassess their relations with the United States. As a result, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan’s governments have begun to take the steps to address (at least publicly) terrorist organizations operating on their soil.

The resumption of Hamas attacks against Israel beginning on June 8 do not bode well for the Palestinian Authority’s control over the terrorist organizations and the Authority’s commitment to the roadmap. The Palestinian Authority’s willingness and ability to dismantle terrorist organizations (rather than just effecting cease fires) is the lynchpin in determining the fate of the roadmap. According to Raanan Gissin, a spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Sharon, “We’re not asking for 100 percent results. We’re asking for 100 percent effort. They know exactly what needs to be done.”⁶

³ Remarks by President Bush on “The Middle East and the Roadmap for Peace,” White House press release, April 30, 2003.

⁴ *The Economist*, “Now, The Waging of Peace,” May 31, 2003.

⁵ *The Economist*, May 31, 2003.

⁶ *Washington Post*, “Israel Close to Ceding Security in Gaza,” June 16, 2003.

Newly elected Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, while agreeing in principle to the terms of the roadmap, thus far has refused to take the critical steps of condemning and agreeing to permanently dismantle terrorist organizations. This was evidenced in recent talks with the Hamas leadership, in which Abbas proposed joint political leadership with Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Yasser Arafat,⁷ and in which Hamas said it would consider restricting terrorist attacks to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.⁸ Under the terms of the roadmap, such an agreement could not be honored, and would effectively result in the scrapping of the entire peace initiative.

What President Bush said a year ago is just as valid today:

“Today, Palestinian authorities are encouraging, not opposing, terrorism. This is unacceptable. And the United States will not support the establishment of a Palestinian state until its leaders engage in a sustained fight against the terrorists and dismantle their infrastructure. The world is prepared to help, yet ultimately these steps toward statehood depend on the Palestinian people and their leaders. If they energetically take the path of reform, the rewards can come quickly.”⁹

Putting the Roadmap in Context

What is the Roadmap?

The “roadmap” is a three-phase, three-year plan for peace between Israel and the Palestinian Authority designed to result in a “final and comprehensive settlement” of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by 2005. As the State Department has noted, “The two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will only be achieved through an end to violence and terrorism, when the Palestinian people have a leadership acting decisively against terror and willing and able to build a practicing democracy based on tolerance and liberty, and through Israel’s readiness to do what is necessary for a democratic Palestinian state to be established.”¹⁰

The State Department describes the plan as a “performance-based and goal-driven roadmap, with clear phases, time lines, target dates, and benchmarks aiming at progress through reciprocal steps by the two parties in the political, security, economic, humanitarian, and institution-building fields, under the auspices of the Quartet [*i.e.*, the United States, the European Union, the United Nations, and Russia].”¹¹ Phase One specifically focuses on ending violence and

⁷ *Associated Press*, “Palestinian Premier Meets Militant Groups to Press for Truce,” June 18, 2003.

⁸ *Jerusalem Post*, “Abbas Offers Hamas, Jihad Role in PA leadership,” June 19, 2003.

⁹ President Bush, June 24, 2002.

¹⁰ U.S. State Department Press Statement, “A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” April 30, 2003.

¹¹ U.S. State Department Press Statement, April 30, 2003.

building confidence between the two parties. The Palestinians are to disarm militants, stop all attacks on Israel, and reform their governing institutions to make them more democratic and accountable. The Israelis are to freeze the building of Jewish settlements in the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza, and withdraw the troops that control the lives of 4 million Palestinians. Phase Two seeks to establish a provisional Palestinian state by the end of 2003.

Phase Three calls for achievement of three goals: a final agreement by the end of 2005 dealing with the status of Jerusalem, which is claimed by both sides as their capital; establishment of the final borders between the two states; and the resolution of the issue of the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their original homes that are now inside Israel.

Of course, calling for a formal agreement does not guarantee an agreement; and some have criticized the specific time tables in the roadmap, pointing out that only results, not arbitrary time lines, will lead to ultimate solutions.

The roadmap is a departure from previous attempts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because it “seeks to bypass negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.”¹² Since the two sides have lost faith in each other, the roadmap’s sponsors are seeking to have both sides take independent, simultaneous actions that will achieve their own goals. The promotion of the roadmap is the first U.S.-backed Middle East peace initiative since Yasser Arafat refused in July 2000 to accept the terms that President Clinton brokered with then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak. With Arafat’s refusal, the current 32-month long *intifada* was launched against Israel, a conflict that has resulted in the deaths of 1,700 Palestinians and 600 Israelis.¹³

The Roadmap and Israel’s Neighbors

It should be clear that, while the United States has an influential role to play, Israel and the Palestinian Authority are chiefly responsible for implementing the terms of the roadmap. Arguably, they are the two entities that have the most to gain from the creation of a viable Palestinian state and peace and security for Israel. However, the burden of implementation also rests on Israel’s neighbors, which have sought, since the nation’s birth in 1948, to destroy it. When President Bush stated a year ago that Middle East peace can be achieved “if all parties break with the past and set out on a new path,” he was not talking solely about Israelis and Palestinians. He was talking about all the parties that have interests in making the roadmap succeed.

¹² *Washington Post*, “A Guide to the Mideast ‘Road Map,” May 23, 2003.

¹³ *Washington Post*, May 23, 2003.

The Arab Islamic states of Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates will play an important role in influencing how the Palestinian Authority implements the necessary measures to fulfill the roadmap's goals. The creation of a viable Palestinian state is in the interest of the neighboring Arab and Muslim states. With the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the ensuing peace, much-needed economic development and engagement will result. In fact, the United States has proposed the Middle East Partnership Initiative, which includes free trade agreements with the nations of the Middle East, as a means of inducing cooperation and commitment in implementing the roadmap.

Such a commitment and demonstration of cooperation by Israel's neighbors would be remarkable. Without question, the Israeli-Palestinian issue has been and remains the core rationale for various Muslim governments' support of terrorist organizations. Their support has created instability and violence in the region by sponsoring, harboring, and financing terrorist groups dedicated to destroying Israel. Creation of a Palestinian state – which is what Hamas, other terrorist organizations, and neighboring Arab Muslim governments have long called for – would effectively deny the rationale for their violent actions and their existence.

For the roadmap to succeed, each of these governments must aggressively condemn and crack down on terrorist organizations operating from their soil, halt all financing to these organizations, and ultimately dismantle (read destroy) these organizations. Any measure that allows these organizations to remain in existence in any form is unacceptable. As to what exactly the United States expects of Israel's neighbors, President Bush has made it clear, as he did during last year's Rose Garden speech:

“Nations are either with us or against us in the war on terror. To be counted on the side of peace, nations must act. Every leader actually committed to peace will end incitement to violence in official media, and publicly denounce homicide bombings. Every nation actually committed to peace will stop the flow of money, equipment, and recruits to terrorist groups seeking the destruction of Israel – including Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah....The nations will also be required to build closer ties of diplomacy and commerce with Israel, leading to full normalization of relations between Israel and the entire Arab world.”¹⁴

The Roadmap and the United States

In his June 24 speech, the President outlined some of the actions that the United States might be willing to take to help the parties succeed. For example, the United States could work with Palestinian leaders to create a new constitutional framework for a working democracy for the Palestinian people. Along with others in the international community, the United States could

¹⁴ President Bush, June 24, 2002.

help the Palestinians organize and monitor fair, multi-party local elections by the end of the year, with national elections to follow.¹⁵

The President noted that the United States, the international donor community, and the World Bank stand ready to work with Palestinians on a major project of economic reform and development, and are willing to oversee reforms in Palestinian finances, encouraging transparency and independent auditing.¹⁶

Absolutely fundamental to understanding the President's support for this "roadmap" process is his commitment to Israel's security and sovereignty. Nothing will be done to violate or undermine Israel's national security. One of the issues critical to Israel in this regard will be whether Palestinian refugees could return to Israeli territory. As *Financial Times* columnist Martin Wolf has written, if the Palestinian refugees currently being sheltered by neighboring Arab states were to return to Israel, "Israel would soon, given the differences in birth rates, become another state with a Jewish minority. So, naturally, skeptical Israelis view this demand [by the Palestinian Authority] as code for destruction of their state."¹⁷

The Bush Administration recently reaffirmed the need for the Israelis and Palestinians to settle security matters between them, presumably precluding any deployment of U.S. "peacekeeping" troops. On June 17, White House Spokesman Ari Fleischer conveyed the Administration's thinking on this issue when he stated that the "President's message is that the best security comes from the Israeli and Palestinians working together to fight terror."¹⁸

It can be argued that if Americans are concerned about continued U.S. casualties in Iraq – as recent public opinion polls have shown – it would be difficult to expect them to support U.S. casualties by Palestinian suicide bombers. After all, deployment of peacekeepers requires a peace that needs to be kept. However, as evidenced by the continued clashes between Hamas and Israeli forces, no such peace or security from terrorism in Israel currently exists. Moreover, if terrorist attacks occurred against U.S. troops and it became necessary to pursue the attackers, U.S. troops would be exposed to international condemnation, not to mention great risks to themselves.

¹⁵ President Bush, June 24, 2002.

¹⁶ President Bush, June 24, 2002.

¹⁷ *Financial Times*, "There Can Be No Right Of Return in a Mideast Peace," June 18, 2003.

¹⁸ *Washington Times*, "U.S. Troops' Role in Mideast Dismissed," June 17, 2003.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the roadmap's success and the future of sustained peace in the Middle East depend on how serious the new Palestinian leadership and the governments of Syria, Iran, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya, and Lebanon are in keeping Arafat out of power and in eliminating terrorist organizations.

The resumption of Hamas attacks on June 8 demonstrates that defeating terrorism remains at the heart of any Middle East peace deal. It is in the world's interest, once and for all, to address the challenge and disruption posed by Islamic terrorist organizations such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and Islamic Jihad. Both sides must accomplish goals leading to peace; but it is the terrorist organizations that are inhibiting the implementation of this process because they have not been willing to eschew their goal of eliminating Israel. This is why President Bush demanded that the Palestinian Authority take all necessary measures to destroy Hamas and similar, evil terrorist organizations.

As President Bush stated last year, "The current situation [in the Middle East] offers no prospect that life will improve. Israeli citizens will continue to be victimized by terrorists, and so Israel will continue to defend herself."¹⁹ Critics have remarked that Israel's continued use of force against Hamas and other terrorist elements has encouraged additional attacks by Hamas as well as hardened Palestinian opposition to implementing the terms of the roadmap.

Moreover, some have criticized Israel's efforts to defend itself by seeking to wipe out, either through pre-emption or in retaliation, terrorists leaders and organizations — by suggesting that these acts are the moral equivalent to the terrorist campaigns themselves. Such notions are astounding. There can be no moral equivalency between a) Israel defending its sovereignty and security by acting against terrorist groups whose sole rationale is to eliminate the Israeli state, and b) those precipitating terrorist acts themselves. Further, Israel's strategy has remained focused on targeting the actual perpetrators of terrorist activities, whereas Hamas, Hezbollah, and Islamic Jihad very rarely focus their violent actions against Israeli military units. Instead, Hamas focuses its attacks against innocent women and children. There is little question that if such terrorist attacks occurred on U.S. soil, these attacks against America would result in the United States assuring the absolute annihilation of the responsible terrorist group.

The President's June 24, 2002 speech was an important historical event. We can only hope that the parties, including those states that sponsor Palestinian terrorism, act on the President's invitation to begin to end the deadly conflict that has caused so much misery for so long.

¹⁹ President Bush, June 24, 2002.